FIVE STEPS INTO THE CHURCH AND SEVEN STEPS TO HEAVEN

The beloved Marshall Keeble often preached in his Gospel meetings a sermon titled “Five Steps into the Church and Seven Steps to Heaven.” It is one of the lessons preserved in the album and CD collection produced by the Gospel Advocate in memory of this great servant of God. The sermon was based, quite simply, on the plan of salvation, which entails five specific steps: (1) Hearing the Gospel (Romans 10:17); (2) Believing in Christ (John 3:16); (3) Repenting of one’s sins (2 Peter 3:9); (4) Confessing Christ (Acts 8:37); and then (5) Being Baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). That places one then in the Church (Acts 2:47), which is the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). One does not join the Lord’s church; rather one is added by the Lord to the church when he or she obeys the Gospel plan of salvation.

The seven steps from there to heaven are the addition of the Christian graces of 2 Peter 1:5-7 to the starting point of one’s personal faith in Christ as a Christian. Peter writes: “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.” Peter teaches that we must: (1) add to our faith virtue (or moral courage); (2) add to virtue greater knowledge of God’s Word; (3) add to this knowledge self-control (or temperance); (4) add to self-control perseverance (or steadfastness, patient endurance); (5) add to perseverance godliness (or piety); (6) add to godliness brotherly kindness (or brotherly love, which emphasizes the relationship believers have to one another in God’s family); and finally (7) add to brotherly kindness love (i.e., the kind of love that takes the best interest of others into consideration in our thoughts and actions).

Peter says: “For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (2 Peter 1:8-9). Further, these will make it possible for us to “make” our “calling and election sure” so that we “will never stumble” (2 Peter 1:10), and they will enable us to enter “abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11). Such a masterful lesson by brother Keeble, because it is so powerful in its beauty and simplicity! It is powerful because it is rooted in, founded upon, and filled with the saving truth of God’s Word. The pristine message in short is for one to become a Christian, a child of the living God, and then be faithful (Revelation 2:10). God’s truth will guide you home where you belong (John 8:31-32).